



# December 2020

# The Tumbleweed



Eden Prairie UMC 15050 Scenic Heights Road Eden Prairie, MN 55344 952-937-8781 prairiechurch.org

## Christmas memories sustain us

I remember it like it was yesterday. Standing in the family room of the homestead my dad had grown up in, I rehearsed my lines for the children’s program at church. They were special lines, usually some part of the scripture to tell the story. My dad worked diligently with us to be ready for the special day when we would be able to share the story of the Good News of Jesus.

Then the Sunday would come. Relatives and neighbors would fill that small worship space in Atwater to hear what the children had to say and to sing. I would be wearing the special dress my mom had made for me to wear. It was magical, beautiful and full of the Spirit of God.

From the Pastor, *please turn to page 2*

## PROP gift cards generosity

There will be a complete report in next month’s issue of The Tumbleweed, but we can confidently report that Eden Prairie UMC provided *at least* 90 gift cards (through Nov. 22) to brighten the holidays for families and individuals served by PROP. You also donated a cart full of groceries, needed household supplies and funds to purchase other items.



## Advent Fest

This year’s Advent Fest will be virtual, Dec. 6, at 4 p.m. on Zoom. Crafts and a time with

Pastor Becky Jo are planned. Turn to Page 8.



EPUMC Women’s Retreat details on page 5.



**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

**THIS CHRISTMAS!**

Consider making a gift to EPUMC’s Christmas Offering, a gift that trusts God to meet our needs while we share our resources with important local ministries of compassion and transformation. Each gift will be shared equally between...

**PROP Food Shelf**—feeding our neighbors in need

**The Solidarity Fund at New City Church**—

a United Methodist Church’s work on the frontlines of efforts to bring racial justice to our city. Learn more here

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ax9cxDI9p8>)

**Make your gifts by mailing a check to EPUMC OR through our website or the Give+ app**

**Don’t forget to turn in your 2021 pledge cards if you have not yet done so. They can be mailed or dropped off at Eden Prairie UMC during office hours.**

# From the Pastor

## **Christmas memories sustain us, *from page 1***

I remember it like it was yesterday. The late afternoon Christmas Eve worship service was about to start, and there my entire family stood in the back of the sanctuary in Excelsior. For years, we served that particular worship service as ushers, handing out bulletins, receiving the offering and passing the light among the worshippers. We left home while it was still light outside. Inside that beautiful worship space as the earth grew dark, the light of Christ became more distinct in the sanctuary. It was magical, beautiful and full of the Spirit of God.

I remember it like it was yesterday. There was a snow storm on Christmas Eve. With three worship services to lead, and a spouse and children involved in various parts of worship, we didn't want to take any chances in not being present for worship. Packing up our traditional Christmas Eve-between-services meal, we headed to the sanctuary in Rochester for the children's service and stayed straight through the midnight worship. Between the services, we lounged around the basement fireside room with other worship leaders who shared our feast. By the time the light of Christ was passed at the midnight worship service, my girls were laid out on the front pew, asleep but within eyesight of mom in the pulpit and dad in the choir. It was magical, beautiful and full of the Spirit of God.

I am sure you remember it like it was yesterday, that special Christmas Eve worship memory that still fills your heart with the peace and beauty of the holy night. I'm sure you remember who you were with, what the space looked and felt like, and how you encountered the very presence of God in that holy worship space.

This year we are longing for that holy space, for gathering together surrounded by the carols and the passing of the candlelight from one to another. This year will not be like any of the ones that have come before for us. Our hearts hurt for an opportunity to worship together in our sanctuary, that space that holds so many holy and precious memories.

The people of God to whom Isaiah speaks in that ancient time were a people exiled from their home. They had been captured by an enemy and marched away from Jerusalem, the holy city, the place in which their theology taught that God lived. They didn't know how to worship God on a regular day, let alone the holiest of days, when they were not in Jerusalem. But they adapted. They began to find ways to experience the holy in their homes. And they did so until they were able to return to Jerusalem, to the temple, to the place that held the very presence of God for them.

What we face is as ancient as that. I encourage you to find ways to create a worship space in your home during Advent. Set aside time each week to gather your family to worship together. Gather candles to make an Advent Wreath and join us in worship as we mark time during Advent. Sing with us. Hear the scripture. Engage in the children's message (even if you are not a child).

And make a plan for worship on Christmas Eve, as you would if you could be in the sanctuary. There will be an on-demand service that you may watch when you wish, and a mostly live worship experience on Zoom at 7 p.m. Whatever you choose, I want to encourage you to adapt in these unusual times and make space and time for worship as we prepare for the birth of the Jesus.

If you make the effort, it will be magical, beautiful and full of the Spirit of God.

A blessed holy season to you and yours,



Pastor Becky Jo Messenbrink



Join us on Zoom each Sunday for ...

**8:15 AM – Bible Study**

**9:30 AM – Fellowship Time** in small group format followed by community prayers

**Recorded Worship & Children's Message**

**ALWAYS available on our website**

[www.prairiechurch.org](http://www.prairiechurch.org)

Zoom ID # 445 569 4215

*How can we possibly worship from home this Advent?*

*How can we possibly sing our carols separated from one another?*

It's been a tough year. COVID illness and deaths, separation from our families and the oppression and violence of one people against another. Remembering Jesus' coming accentuates the pain we are feeling. It is comforting to remember that Jesus was born into a time of violence, oppression and difficulty. The story of Jesus' coming, in scripture and carol, calls us to transformation and reconciliation that is possible through the hope, love, joy and peace that is ours in Jesus. The words of an anonymous Jewish poet speak to us and will frame our worship this Advent and Christmas:

*"I believe in the sun, even when the sun is not shining."*

**Let's fill the night with music and light, believing, even when there is pain, uncertainty and distance.**

### November 29

*First Sunday of Advent*

I Believe in the Sun: **HOPE** for Tomorrow

Mark 1:1-15; Isaiah 40:1-5

Anthem by Chancel Choir

### December 6

*Second Sunday of Advent*

I Believe in the **LOVE**: Daring Right Relationship

Isaiah 7:1-14; Matthew 1:16-25

Special Music by Praise Band

### December 13

*Third Sunday of Advent*

I Believe in God: Ode to **JOY**

Luke 1:26-56

Semi-Live Worship with Communion at 10 AM

Have a piece of bread and a cup of juice (whatever you have on hand) available for communion, and join us on Zoom

Choral Cantata - Magnificat

### December 20

*Fourth Sunday of Advent*

I Believe in the Light: Illuminating **PEACE**

Isaiah 9:2-7; John 1:1-18

Special Music by Handbell Ensemble

### December 29

First Sunday after Christmas Worship

*Worship on church website*

### December 24<sup>th</sup>

## *Christmas Eve Worship*

Two Opportunities for Worship

### Worship with Our On-Demand Service

Available on the church website at [www.prairiechurch.org](http://www.prairiechurch.org)

The Children of EPUMC share the story of Jesus's birth through...

*"The ABC's of Christmas"*

with special Music by the Children's Choir

Luke 2:1-4

### Worship with us LIVE on Zoom

Available on the church Zoom account @ **7:00 PM**

**We Believe, Even Now**

Isaiah 52: 7-10; Luke 2:1-20

Live Christmas Message by Pastor Becky Jo

Communion Shared

Have a piece of bread and a cup of juice (whatever you have on hand)

available for communion

*Carols and Candlelight*

Be sure to have a candle ready for singing Silent Night

# Music Director's Notes

By Megan Peterson

## December Music Happenings

**Sunday, December 13- Cantata Sunday**  
The choir has been hard at work preparing this year's Cantata, "Magnificat." We have met on Zoom weekly to work together, learning the music, and then work individually at home with audio rehearsal tracks. Each singer records themselves individually at home, and each of these videos is layered on top of each other until we are a choir!

Though all of us can't wait for the day we can sing in the same room together again, this adaptiveness has allowed us to invite other singers outside of our small radius of Eden Prairie. We are so excited to have these new singers joining us! Using the text of Mary's Magnificat, the three movements explore Mary's emotions after she learns she is carrying the son of God. Join us online to hear this beautiful work.

**Lead a Christmas Eve Hymn-** If you are interested in joining a small Christmas hymn group to help lead worship virtually during the season, please contact me! Megan Peterson, [meganp@prairiechurch.org](mailto:meganp@prairiechurch.org)

## Get to Know Your Musicians

Name: Beth Holland

What is your musical background?

My musical background starts with singing from the get go. My family sings all the time. (Ask me some time about a breakfast in Hallstatt, Austria.) At my church I sang in each age-appropriate choir as I aged. Junior high kids could play in a bell choir, so I joined. In senior high we changed membership to a much smaller church. I sang with the adult choir and learned how to perform every week.

Meanwhile I played alto saxophone in school bands from 5th grade until I was a junior in



marching band. Piano lessons started in 6th grade. I stayed faithful to that discipline through 9th grade. One piano teacher included organ lessons in my keyboard experiences.

What other hobbies do you have? I love to read, ride horses, travel, quilt, cross stitch, craft, create. Let me take this opportunity to recruit any quilters out there. We have a new group going at our church called Block Party. If you quilt, and are interested in meeting with a group of other fun quilters, let me know. ([bjwholland@gmail.com](mailto:bjwholland@gmail.com))

What music group(s) have you participated with at EPUMC? At Eden Prairie UMC I have been singing in the choir since before I joined the church. Whenever I join a new church, my avenue into the community is through the choir. I have a policy of getting into the choir as quickly as possible.

What is your favorite hymn/anthem? My favorite hymn. Oh how can I choose just one?!

For rich harmonies - All Hail the Power (there are three versions; one of them has awesome men's parts in the chorus.)

For group participation - Amazing Grace

For contemplation - Spirit of God

For a little known song sung in a minor key - Once to Every Man and Nation

For social justice - Lift Every Voice

For generational connection - For All the Saints (Sung at all my relatives' funerals since my grandfather's)

For Christmas - Angels We Have Heard on High and Silent Night

I'll stop there. You get the idea.

What does sacred music mean to you? Sacred music has been in my ear since infancy. It is in my bones. The music and the words can transform rational thinking into feeling. Many of the above mentioned songs, along with others, can bring me to tears. Maybe I am stuck because my connection is much more emotional than rational. I am sure some philosopher or poet has expressed what I want to say, but I don't have the words.

Meet the Musician, Alan Kretzschmar,  
On the next page



## ZOOM into Retreat – EPUMC Women’s Retreat set for Jan. 30, 2021

So, taking a poll – anybody feeling stressed out at all in 2020? Take some time to nurture your spirit and your church relationships Saturday, Jan. 30, with the very special Women’s Retreat 2021, Zoom Edition! Pastor Becky Jo and our women’s Retreat Team are cooking up a creative and restorative experience for you.

Our theme is “Praying through the Dishes... and Other Ways to Connect with God at Home.” You will explore various practices and techniques to bring mindfulness, meaning and connection with God into your everyday life using a variety of large group, small group and individual off-line activities throughout the day, closing with worship. Sessions will

run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, with a bonus evening session featuring a theme-linked craft project and games with friends. You will receive a special, festive packet with everything you need. Cost is \$20.

Watch for the online registration and payment link in the Monday Morning emails during December and January; contact the church office if you have any questions or need to register via postal mail. We also encourage you to invite friends! This will be a one-of-a-kind experience; your team has lots of creative ideas and you will never forget EPUMC Women’s Retreat 2021: Covid Edition! Plan to join us and register soon.

### Share the Warmth

Winter brings many challenges for those who are homeless, and staying warm is a big one. On Jan. 17, 2021 Eden Prairie UMC host a drive thru as we collect NEW thermals for men and women, heavy duty winter gloves, hats, and hand warmers for guests of Simpson Shelter. Unfortunately, they are unable to accept coats or hand knit items. You can also drop items off at church during office hours (Monday and Thursday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Watch the weekly emails to know when we are ready to accept items.

### *And the tree came tumblin’ down*

After a couple of year’s absence, Lumberjack Days returned to Eden Prairie UMC Saturday, Nov. 7. There were six participants this year along with three chainsaws, a bobcat, and a tractor. A 40-ringed, diseased elm was cut down and piled high in less than two hours for the City of Eden Prairie to haul away.

Many thanks to John Clay (and his big toys), Jim Myers, Luke Olson, Spencer Hagen, Rick LaMothe, and Eric Hyde, who organized this year’s event. Special thanks to Jim for putting the finishing touches on the project Tuesday evening. Fun was had by all, I am sure. – Rick LaMothe

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Meet Alan Kretzschmar

Name: Alan Kretzschmar

What is your musical background?

I’ve enjoyed being surrounded by musicians all my life. My mother is a music teacher, organist and choir director. My wife is a music therapist.

My kids were both music majors in college. I’ve sung in choirs since childhood. I have acted in musicals with community theaters along with my family. Growing up, I’ve tried lessons in piano, cello and guitar. I also played in a bell choir. I’ve been singing in Angelica Encore, a local community choir for the last four years.



What other hobbies do you have? I like to draw, making art with digital technologies.

What music group(s) have you participated with at EPUMC? At EPUMC, I have sung in choir since 2004 and participated in church musicals.

What is your favorite hymn/anthem? I like most hymns/anthems and don’t have a favorite.

What does sacred music mean to you? To me, sacred music is a means to focus on the teachings of Christ.



**Advent is almost here. . . . .**

There is still time to support sanctuary visuals and reserve a poinsettia! This year you don't have to wait until Christmas Eve to bring it home. (Details about pick-up will be in the Monday Morning emails.)

Fill out this form (*please print!*) and send it to the church, EPUMC, 15050 Scenic Heights Road, Eden Prairie MN 55344 with your payment by **Dec. 15**.

Given by (Your Name):

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Phone/e-mail:

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In memory of

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In honor of

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Questions?

Call Ginger Eddy @ 612-251-7096

**You want to connect with people. People want to connect with you.**

According to a 2019 Mayo clinic article, "Socializing not only staves off feelings of loneliness, but also it helps sharpen memory and cognitive skills, increases your sense of happiness and well-being, and may even help you live longer.

In-person is best, but connecting via technology also works." As we continue to struggle with the Covid-19 pandemic, we know that in-person for the time being may not be best. But the good news is "technology also works."



We invite you to be with others in our congregation as part of **Let's Connect!**

**Let's Connect** is a collection of small groups whose purpose is to make deep and personal connections with others at Eden Prairie United Methodist Church. These groups seek to build community to care for each other and to keep one another connected. The next groups will begin in January.

Here are comments from members of current **Let's Connect** groups:

"I've enjoyed being part of a small group and have gotten to know people better."

"I enjoyed getting to find out on what's going on in people's lives. It helped to see church people that I hadn't seen since the pandemic started."

"It is a treat to relax and visit with our little support group. While we can't see all our church friends, it is fun to reconnect with people in our gatherings."

New **Let's Connect** groups will form in January. Sign-ups will be available at that time, or you can join now by contacting Deb Soderholm, [debsoderholm@gmail.com](mailto:debsoderholm@gmail.com), or Bruce Webster, [brucedwebster@comcast.net](mailto:brucedwebster@comcast.net).

## Worship Outlines and sermons

The church office is happy to send out weekly worship outlines and Pastor Becky Jo's sermon, either as a digital file (via email) or paper copy. Please call 952-937-8781 or email [office@prairiechurch.org](mailto:office@prairiechurch.org) to get started.

## THANK YOU—THANK YOU

### Dear Friends in Mission:

Thank you!

The dear people you just helped with your gift of \$930 to the UMCOR COVID-19 response fund may never have the opportunity to meet you, but if they did, I am certain their response would be – *Thank you!* And through your financial support *you* are serving within a vital web of interactive relationships, partnering to engage globally in direct ministry to people in need.

Together, may we continue to reveal the love of God [for all] and to demonstrate the healing power of the gospel with those who suffer.

Grace and peace, Roland Fernandes,  
General Secretary, UMCOR

### Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ at Eden Prairie UMC,

Thank you for participating in the Minnesota Hurricane Mission Collection. Each donation is a blessing God uses to bless you and others. Your donations, including \$30 for shipping costs, will leave Midwest Mission and be a practical example of God's love in the world to the "least of these." "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" Matthew 25:40 (NIV)

It is due to your generosity and partnership with Midwest Mission that we can touch so many lives for Christ around the world and around the corner. Thank you so much for blessing others through the ministry of Midwest Mission! Yours in Christ, Chantel Corrie, Executive Director

## Youth Ministry

By Terri Myers

In "Charlie Brown's Christmas," Charlie Brown exclaims, "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?"

His friend Linus responds from the book of Luke 2:8-20. In part: "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will be great joy for all the people.'"

Our Christmas may look different this year, parties are cancelled, family gatherings are small and Christmas church service is remote. The hustle and bustle of the season has changed, and maybe that is a good thing. Maybe it is time again to remember what Christmas is all about! "I bring you good news."

Remember that Pre-confirmation and Higher Ground (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) meet each Wednesday via Zoom at 6:30 p.m.

**December 2** is our next in the Speaker Series. A representative from PROP will help us understand what is happening in our own communities regarding food and housing insecurity.

**December 9** we have a Christmas lesson and discussion.

**December 16** will be a Holiday Celebration with games and community.

**December 23 and 30**—Holiday Break

**January 6, 2021** all four youth groups will hear a guest speaker from the Emily program to discuss disordered eating and our response. We invite parents and other adults to listen to the speaker and then break into a separate room for discussion.

### Special Event!

A Class of 2021 senior meet-up via Zoom Sunday, Dec. 6, at 7 p.m. All high school seniors are invited join us to discuss what you are feeling in your final year of high school and receive support from fellow seniors.

# Children's Ministries

By Rachel Casper, Director

## Facebook Sunday school

In November we had a wonderful time with our stewardship series, learning how Jesus can restore our hearts. With Advent beginning Nov. 29, we will prepare for the birth of our Lord and savior. If you are not a member of our Facebook Sunday school page, please contact Rachel Casper at [rachelc@prairiechurch.org](mailto:rachelc@prairiechurch.org) and we will make sure to get you connected. Each week, we offer scripture and age-appropriate stories for all children.

## Zoom Sunday school

We will have Zoom Sunday school for the younger kids, Preschool – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, Dec. 13 at 11:30 a.m. The kids will celebrate the third Sunday of Advent.

On Dec. 27 at 11:30 a.m. we will have Zoom Sunday school for the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade kids.

I will send out a supply list and Zoom link ahead of the lesson for an activity we can do together.



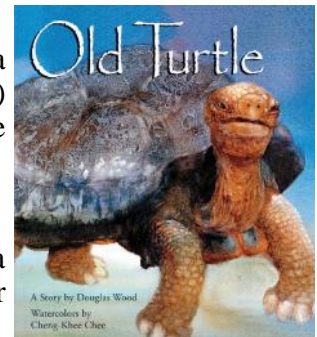
## Advent Fest

Join us Dec. 6 at 4 p.m. for a virtual Advent Festival. There will be three separate breakout rooms for crafts and a story with Pastor Becky Jo. We invite all children from Preschool – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade to log in and join us. Invite your grandchildren, too! To join the Advent Fest: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4097134839>

If you need Advent bag before the festival (filled with craft kits and more) and have not received one, please contact Rachel Casper at [rachelc@prairiechurch.org](mailto:rachelc@prairiechurch.org).

## Story Time with Ms. Kay

Join Ms. Kay on Dec. 20 at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom for a beautiful story of a wise old Turtle. *Old Turtle* is a book by Douglas Wood (Minnesota author) about creation and the nature of God. This classic book celebrates the sacredness of life and the glory of God that shows through everywhere.



## Wednesday night activities — Rooted and Holy Club

Dec. 2. The four Eden Prairie youth groups will meet together to hear a guest speaker from PROP talking about its programs to help others in our community.

Dec. 9 and 16 we will be back on our regular schedule for Rooted and Holy Club.

Watch for details and links to the correct Zoom account in the Youth Preview email that arrives Monday afternoon. If you don't see it, please check your spam folder. Becky Coleman in the church office can add your family to the distribution list ([office@prairiechurch.org](mailto:office@prairiechurch.org)).

We will not meet Dec 23 or Dec 30, as we enjoy the Christmas holidays.

## Helpers welcome!

Even though we are not meeting in person, we can still use your help with our children's programming. If you are interested in helping on a regular basis or just once in a while. please let me know. [rachelc@prairiechurch.org](mailto:rachelc@prairiechurch.org)



## Notes from missionary Ardell Graner

Earlier this year we hosted two Volunteer in Mission Teams, Bethany UMC, Madison, WI, and a Solar Oven Partners UMC team from South Dakota. We are very grateful for your visits and partnership in distribution solar ovens in the Dominican Republic. (Learn more at [www.granerfamily.org](http://www.granerfamily.org)).

Within days of saying good-bye to the South Dakota team, we entered a shelter-at-home quarantine with a curfew that continues to the present day. The global pandemic has affected us all in life-changing ways. For our work here, we have had to suspend solar oven distribution.

However, we have had time to focus on an evaluation of the last five years. In 2019, our Dominican director, Rev. Erasme, accompanied

another colleague, José-Rafael, to do a major survey of the individuals who have received solar ovens since 2015.

We have met weekly for the last two months to evaluate our work with solar ovens distributed to about 25 rural communities throughout the country. We are examining our organizational structure, our relationship with the *Iglesia Evangelica Dominicana*, and our theological base. We are prioritizing a deeper understanding of the communities we have reached. Our discussions have been passionate, exciting and enlightening. We feel like we are co-creators with God in this important mission.

*Ed. Note:* Eden Prairie UMC has supported missionary Ardell Graner in her work in the Dominican Republic. Her husband, Gordon, retired in 2019.

### December 2020 Calendar

#### Sunday Schedule

8:15 am Adult Bible Study on Zoom  
9:30 am Fellowship Time on Zoom  
10 am Worship on website  
10 am Children's Sunday School on Facebook

#### Wednesday, December 2

10 am Staff Meeting  
6:30 pm Youth Program — all groups attend Speaker Series, featuring speaker from PROP  
7 pm Book Group with Pastor Becky Jo  
7 pm Chancel Choir

#### Thursday, December 3

9 am Book Group with Pastor Becky Jo  
6:30 pm Core Team

#### Sunday, December 6

Second Sunday of Advent  
Regular Sunday schedule  
4 pm Advent Festival on Zoom  
7 pm Class of 2021 meets on Zoom

#### Wednesday, Dec. 9

10 am Staff Meeting  
6:30 pm Youth Groups  
7 pm Book Group with Pastor Becky Jo  
7 pm Chancel Choir

#### Thursday, Dec. 10

9 am Book Group with Pastor Becky Jo

#### Sunday, Dec. 13

Third Sunday of Advent  
Regular Sunday Schedule with Cantata, semi-live worship and Communion on Zoom (10 am)

#### Wednesday, Dec. 16

10 am Staff Meeting  
6:30 pm Youth Groups  
7 pm Book Group with Pastor Becky Jo  
7 pm Chancel Choir

#### Thursday, Dec. 17

9 am Book Group with Pastor Becky Jo  
7 pm Administration Team

#### Sunday, Dec. 20

Fourth Sunday of Advent  
Regular Sunday Schedule  
11:30 am Live Sunday School  
6:30 pm Children's story time with Ms. Kay

#### Wednesday, Dec. 23

10 am Staff meeting

#### Thursday, Dec. 24

##### Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve Worship with Children's Program, website  
7 pm, Carols, Candlelight and Communion on Zoom (mostly live)

#### Friday, Dec. 25

Merry Christmas — church office closed

#### Sunday, Dec. 27

Regular Sunday Schedule  
10 am Worship provided through the Minnesota Annual Conference  
11:30 am Live Sunday School grades 3-5)

#### Monday, Dec. 28

Church office closed — staff holiday

#### Dec. 30

10 am Staff Meeting

#### Dec. 31

All financial gifts for 2020 must be received or postmarked by Dec. 31.

# COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ACTION

## Partnering with Simpson Housing Services

Eden Prairie UMC has signed up to provide meals at the Simpson Shelter in 2020. Our last scheduled date is December.

We hope to fully fund the cost of catered meals, as that is currently the Simpson Shelter policy for food service. It costs about \$400 to do this. To help us continue to support Simpson Shelter as they feed the folks who are staying with them, please make your donation at <http://www.prairichurch.org/online-giving> or the Give+ App (choosing “Simpson Shelter”), or mail a donation to the church indicating the gift is for Simpson Shelter. Thanks for your ongoing attention to be a church that is “big enough to make a difference!”



## News from Simpson Housing Services

By Steve Horsfield, SHS Executive Director

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, we have maintained our commitment to 24/7 shelter operations, and we will continue to do so for the duration of the pandemic. We extend our gratitude to our staff members who have, without interruption, responded to the needs of 531 households (individuals and families).

We are grateful to our community supporters who have provided generous donations for our shelter program during the pandemic. We have provided safe shelter for 242 guests and helped 26 guests transition to stable housing.

In September, we announced our plans for moving forward with the new Simpson Community Shelter and Apartments at the site of our current shelter. This modern and dignified low-barrier shelter space will include 70 beds and 42 units of permanent housing to meet the short-term housing needs of our guests and position us to provide shelter, advocate support and intensive resources to guests.

With generous funding from Hennepin County, Simpson added 20 new women's shelter beds at the current shelter in September. Simpson and four other shelter partners are working with Hennepin County on projects that will add another 200 shelter beds to our shelter system by the end of the year.

Learn more at [simpsonhousing.org](http://simpsonhousing.org).

## PROP adjusts focus to respond to pandemic

One hardship can lead to many others and 2020 brought a myriad of changes to our clients and to PROP itself. Here's what changed and how we shifted our focus to where it was needed.

### *How PROP is helping*

**Helping Clients Find Work:** Added another contact-free service - an online digital job board to help clients find local available jobs. Our employment counselor works virtually with both clients and local employers to facilitate job matches!

**Providing More Short-Term Financial Assistance:** Covering multiple months and helping families who were in crisis up to six months ago with additional assistance due to COVID-19 hardships.

**Welcoming to All and Responding to their Needs.** Since COVID, 300% increase in usage of Language Line to better serve the diversity needs of our client base.

**Making Sure Everyone Has Fresh, Wholesome Food:** Spending 2-3 times more each month to meet our clients' food needs, including purchasing fresh produce boxes for Summer Food for Kids as well as for general family distribution.

## Adult Small Groups

*All in-person, indoor gatherings at Eden Prairie UMC are cancelled until further notice. The Core Team continues to evaluate when it is safe to open, with guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Annual Conference.*

### **The Women's Evening Book Group**

We meet every other month to discuss fiction and nonfiction selections that expand viewpoints on social and ethical issues. We are meeting on Zoom and will gather Jan. 12, 2021 at 7 p.m. Our book for January is ***The Rent Collector*** by Cameron Wright. Contact Deb Wagner at [deb@drwhome.com](mailto:deb@drwhome.com).

March 16 we will discuss on Zoom ***The Readers of Broken Wheel Recommend*** by Katarina Biral; May 11, ***The Girl Who Wrote in Silk*** by Kelli Estes, and in September we will read ***This Tender Land*** by William Kent Krueger

### **Men's Discussion Group**

We are zooming every Wednesday at 9 a.m. Every week I send out a zoom meeting to the email list. Presently we are viewing a historical lecture on the New Testament for a half-hour and then discussion for 30-45 minutes or as long as they want. All I need is an email address and then they will have to load Zoom onto their lap top, computer or cell phone before the meeting. Contact Steve Sopoci, [stsopoci@comcast.net](mailto:stsopoci@comcast.net)

**Cheers Too** is a social gathering of women from the church. We meet at 8 am on Saturdays. Things are a bit different now. We are awake, but perhaps in PJs still. We are drinking our coffee, tea or other beverage, but we made it at home. If chatting with cheerful church women sounds like a great way to start your Saturday, let us know! We would love to have you join us! Send an email to Beth Holland [bjwholland@gmail.com](mailto:bjwholland@gmail.com), and she will invite you.

**GEMS (God's Exceptional Methodist Seniors) Breakfast Group** During the pandemic, we are finding new ways to connect by sharing stories. Contact Deb Soderholm, [debsoderholm@gmail.com](mailto:debsoderholm@gmail.com).

**Prayer Network** – Praying for the church family's concerns and joys on a daily basis. Please contact the office at 952-937-8781 or [office@prairiechurch.org](mailto:office@prairiechurch.org) to be included in the Network or if you have a prayer request.

**Let's Connect** groups, see page 6.

**Inter-Knits Prayer Shawl Ministry continues to knit and crochet at home.** These shawls are given to members who have need of healing. If you are interested or have questions, please contact Sherry Harms at 952-658-6868.

### **Block Party Quilt Group**

Use your time at home to make cozy crafts that will warm your family or others in this troubled time. We exchange emails and share quilting videos and tips; contact Beth Holland, ([bjwholland@gmail.com](mailto:bjwholland@gmail.com)) for info.

### **Book Chicks**

A group of women who are friends and booklovers come together to talk books enjoy one another's company. We meet every six weeks. For more information and to connect to our private Facebook group, reach out to Sarah Bosch at [smbosch77@gmail.com](mailto:smbosch77@gmail.com).





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**Church office hours:**

9 a.m.—1 p.m. Monday and Thursday  
9 a.m.—5 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.



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